

Message Text

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ACTION AID-31

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AF-06 PC-01 USIA-06 IO-11 INR-07 DODE-00

AGR-05 INT-05 COME-00 FDRE-00 OES-03 IGA-02 /078 W
----- 004069

P R 101105Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5114

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NOUAKCHOTT 0321

AFDROUGHT

AF/W FOR BISHOP; AFR/CWR FOR SHEAR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID SWEL PFOR MR US

SUBJECT: MAURITANIAN REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY FOOD AID

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 284

SUMMARY: MISSION HAS JUST RECEIVED REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY FOOD AID FROM GIRM. SIMILAR REQUEST HAS BEEN OR SOON WILL BE SENT TO OTHER DONORS. FOR BOTH POLITICAL AND HUMANITARIAN REASONS, MISSION URGES POSITIVE CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST AS LONG AS WE ARE SATISFIED THAT INTERNAL TRANSPORT PROBLEM WILL BE SOLVED. RECOMMEND PRIMARY CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO SFSG. END SUMMARY.

1. ON FEBRUARY 7, EMBASSY RECEIVED FOREIGN MINISTRY NOTE 138 WHICH REQUESTS EMERGENCY FOOD AID. TRANSLATION FOLLOWS: QTE THE MINISTRY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS PRESENTS ITS COMPLIMENTS TO THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND HAS THE HONOR TO PRESENT A REQUEST RELATIVE TO FOOD AID FOR THE YEAR 1976.

SINCE 1969, MAURITANIA HAS UNDERGONE A PARTICULARLY
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SEVERE DROUGHT CYCLE, WHICH SEVERELY AFFECTED RURAL SOCIETY, ACCENTUATING THE EXODUS TOWARD THE LARGE CITIES,

AND IN LARGE PART DECIMATING LIVESTOCK, THE PRINCIPAL SOURCE OF INCOME OF THE RURAL POPULATION.

THE IMPROVEMENT IN RAINFALL DURING 1974 AND 1975 HAS HAD LIMITED IMPACT ON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, AS A RESULT OF GRASSHOPPER, BIRD, AND PRDATORY RODENT ATTACKS. THE 1975-1976 AGRICULTURAL RESULTS WERE PARTICULARLY BAD. THE TOTAL DEFICIT IS ESTIMATED AT 50,000 TONS, AND THE NEED FOR RESERVE STOCKS AT 20,000 TONS. THERE ARE PRESENTLY NO MORE RESERVE STOCKS AND THE FOOD GENEROUSLY SUPPLIED BY FRIENDLY COUNTRIES AND INTER-NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS HAS ALREADY BEEN DISTRIBUTED AND CONSUMED.

IN ORDER TO FACE UP TO THIS SITUATION AND TO ASSIST THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO AID THE PERSONS AFFECTED BY THE DROUGHT, THE MINISTRY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, WHILE THANKING THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA FOR THE SIZABLE AID IT HAS ALREADY GRANTED, WOULD BE GRATEFUL TO THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA FOR TRANSMITTING TO THE APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES A REQUEST FOR FOOD ASSISTANCE AND FOR HELP IN ANY OTHER FORM. THIS AID COULD INCLUDE CEREALS, WHEAT, CORN, AND SORGHUM AS WELL AS MILK PRODUCTS, WHOLE MILK, AND BUTTER OIL. THE OVERALL NEEDS OF THE COUNTRY ARE 70,000 TONS OF CEREALS, 6,000 TONS OF MILK, 4,000 TONS OF BUTTER OIL, AND 3,000 TONS OF WHEAT OR CORN FLOUR.

AS A RESULT OF THE LOW PURCHASING POWER OF THE PEOPLE, THE MINISTRY OF STATE WOULD HOPE THAT THE AID WHICH WILL BE ACCORDED WOULD COME WITH ALL COSTS PAID TO THE STORAGE POINTS IN MAURITANIAN PORTS.

THE MINISTRY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS WOULD BE GRATEFUL TO THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA FOR INFORMING IT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE OF THE INTENTIONS OF ITS GOVERNMENT OR ITS COMPETENT AUTHORITIES AND, IF NECESSARY, THE ESTIMATED TIME INVOLVED, IN ORDER THAT SHIPMENTS MAY BE STAGGERED THROUGH COORDINATION IN NOUAKCHOTT AMONG THE REPRESENTATIVES
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OF THE COUNTRIES OR ORGANIZATIONS CONCERNED.

THE MINISTRY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF MAURITANIA THANKS THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA FOR ITS DILIGENT ACTION AND TAKES THIS OCCASION TO RENEW ITS ASSURANCES OF ITS VERY HIGH CONSIDERATION.
UNQTE.

2. THIS 83,000 TON REQUEST IS CONSIDERABLY HIGHER THAN THAT MADE BY THE DROUGHT COORDINATOR (DEFENSE

MINISTER) IN NOVEMBER 1975 AND INCORPORATED INTO THE WFP MULTI-DONOR REPORT, WHICH WAS FOR 55,000 TONS, INCLUDING RESERVE STOCKS AND ALL TYPES OF FOOD. IT IS CORRECT THAT PRESENT STOCKS ARE LOW. ANALYSIS BY WFP REP AND FFPO OF AVAILABLE DATA ON STOCKS IN TOWNS IN SOUTHERN HALF OF COUNTRY (CHECKING IN NORTH NOT POSSIBLE DUE MILITARY SITUATION) PRODUCED FOLLOWING ESTIMATED TOTALS AS OF 31 DECEMBER: 990 TONS WHEAT, 2,380 SORGHUM (MUCH OF WHICH 18 MONTHS OLD), 120 SFSG, 1,455 CORN, 160 MILK, 115 CSB, AND 135 OIL. THIS TOTAL UNDOUBTEDLY MUCH LOWER NOW AS RESULT OF CONSUMPTION AND SHIPMENTS TO NORTH, ESPECIALLY INTO SAHARA.

3. IT IS TRUE THERE HAVE BEEN SUBSTANTIAL CROP LOSSES. HOWEVER, BELIEVE FOOD SHORTAGES WILL TAKE PLACE PRIMARILY IN NORTH AND EAST. PROBABLY MOST OF SORGHUM NEED COULD BE SUPPLIED BY LOCAL PRODUCTION, SINCE NORTHERN HALF OF COUNTRY EATS WHEAT, NOT SORGHUM OR CORN. SORGHUM EATERS CONCENTRATED PRIMARILY IN SORGHUM-PRODUCING OR ADJACENT AREAS. FFPO TOLD DROUGHT COORDINATOR IN EARLY DECEMBER WHEN DISCUSSING COORDINATOR'S REQUEST TO WFP REP THAT WHEAT AND MILK NOT ON LIST OF AVAILABLE US PRODUCTS, EVEN IF US WERE TO RESPOND TO MULTI-DONOR

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NOUAKCHOTT 0321

REPORT REQUEST.

4. ALTHOUGH AS OF MORNING FEBRUARY 9 ONLY UNDP HAD RECEIVED SIMILAR NOTE, FED REP ADVISED HE HAS BEEN TOLD BY GIRM THAT NOTES ARE BEING SENT TO ALL POTENTIAL DONORS.

5. AS DISCUSSED VARIOUS AIDAC MESSAGES, MISSION FEELS THAT IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IN EVALUATING ANY FOOD ASSISTANCE REQUEST IS FACT THAT BULK OF FOOD WILL LIKELY GO TO NORTH, INCLUDING SAHARA, WHERE END-USE CHECKS NOT POSSIBLE DUE MILITARY SITUATION. FOOD MIGHT ALSO BE USED TO FEED MILITARY PERSONNEL. FOREIGN MINISTRY NOTE DOESN NOT, HOWEVER, SUGGEST THAT FOOD WILL BE USED IN SAHARA. IN FACT, MISSION MAY RECEIVE SEPARATE REQUEST FOR FOOD FOR USE IN SAHARA PER NOUAKCOTT 295.

6. ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IS LIKELIHOOD THERE WILL BE INTERNAL TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS AFTER ARRIVAL OF ANY FOOD SHIPMENTS TO MAURITANIA. AS REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, BULK OF MAURITANIAN MILITARY AND OPERATION VIVRES FLEET, AS WELL AS MANY REQUISITIONED VEHICLES, ARE OPERATING IN NORTH. DIFFICULTIES IN DISTRIBUTION, WHICH WERE ENCOUNTERED IN PAST YEARS WHILE USING BOTH ENTIRE OPERATION VIVRES FLEET AND CONTRACT TRUCKERS, GIVE INDICATION OF SIZE OF
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PROBLEM. BELIEVE FOOD ASSISTANCE SHOULD BE CONTEMPLATED ONLY UPON FIRM GIRM COMMITMENT TO PROVIDE NECESSARY TRANSPORT. SUCH COMMITMENT MAY NOT, OF COURSE, BE MEANINGFUL SINCE MILITARY SITUATION APHYIME OF FOOD ARRIVAL MY PREVENT GIRM FROM PROVIDING NECESSARY TRUCKS. MOREOVER, FLEET CONDITION BY THAT TIME MAY BE SUCH THAT REMAINING OPERATIONAL VEHICLES INSUFFICIENT TO HAUL FOOD.

7. SITUATION IS AGGRAVATED BY TIMING OF REQUEST. SHOULD US AND/OR OTHER DONORS AGREE IMMEDIATELY TO REQUEST, ARRIVALS WOULD BE CONCENTRATED IN APRIL-JUNE PERIOD. SINCE RAINS NORMALLY START IN JULY, HAULING TO EAST WOULD HAVE TO BE DONE IN SHORTER PERIOD THAN IN 1975, WHICH WOULD REQUIRE EVEN MORE TRANSPORT. AS HEAD OF GIRM CEREALS OFFICE REMARKED IN JANUARY, EVEN IF HE HAD A BUDGET AND WERE ABLE TO ORDER A TRUCK FLEET, THE FLEET COULD NOT POSSIBLE ARRIVE BEFORE THE PERIOD OF NEED. THUS, EXISTING FLEET BEING USED FOR MILITARY PURPOSES IS THE ONLY POSSIBLE FOOD HAULING SURFACE FLEET. ALSO WISH NOTE THAT PAST EFFECTIVE HAULING OF FOOD STOCKS DUE VIRUTALLY ENTIRELY TO EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION OF ARMY CAPTAIN GABRIEL CIMPER, WHO NOW RETURNED TO REGULAR MILITARY DUTIES, WITH NO OFFICER REMAINING IN OPERATION VIVRES CAPABLE OF EFFECTIVELY REPLACING HIM.

8. LOOKING TO POSITIVE SIDE OF TRANSPORTATION SITUATION,

GIRM HAS RECENTLY SHOWN WILLINGNESS TO PUT AIR MAURITANIE (TWO F-27N, TWO DC-3S, AND ONE DC-4) AT DISPOSITION OF MILITARY TO SUPPORT SAHARAN CAMPAIGN. IN EVENT GIRM IS UNABLE TO TRANSPORT FOOD BY SURFACE, IT MIGHT WELL DECIDE TO PRESS AIR MAURITANIE INTO SERVICE. MAURITANIAN AIR FORCE HAS ALSO PURCHASED TWO SMALL SKYVAN TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT WHICH COULD BE USED TO HAUL FOOD SUPPLIES. WE APPRECIATE THAT THIS LIFT CAPACITY IS NOT GREAT, BUT IT WOULD

NEVERTHELESS BE HELPFUL IN A REAL PINCH. GIRM MIGHT ALSO BE ABLE TO CALL ON SERVICES OF C-130 FROM FRIENDLY AFRICAN OR ARAB COUNTRY, E.G. MOROCCO OR GABON.

9. MISSION BELIEVES REQUEST SHOULD BE CONSIDERED IN CONTEXT OF SHOWING SUPPORT FOR OULD DADDAH GOVERNMENT AT
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THIS CRITICAL JUNCTURE AS WELL AS FOR EXPRESS HUMANITARIAN NEED. (FOR AMPLIFICATION THIS TOPIC, SEE NOUAKCHOTT 177.) AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, WE TURNED DOWN REQUEST FOR GRANT MILITARY AID. WHETHER OR NOT FOOD WILL BE USED IN MAURITANIAN-CONTROLLED PORTION OF SAHARA, AS OPPOSED TO MAURITANIA ITSELF, IS NOT THE CRUCIAL POLITICAL CONSIDERATION. QUICK, POSITIVE RESPONSE, KEEPING IN MIND CAVEATS NOTED ABOVE, WOULD PROVIDE US WITH SUBSTANTIAL POLITICAL MILEAGE AT TIME WHEN MAURITANIA HAS STOPPED SLAVISH IMITATION OF ALGERIA IN INTERNATIONAL FORA AND INDICATED FIRST SIGNS OF FOLLOWING MORE MODERATE FOREIGN POLICIES, E.G. ON ANGOLA. CONSEQUENTLY, MISSION URGES SPEEDY, POSITIVE REPLY TO REQUEST.

10. SHOULD, USG RESPOND AFFIRMATIVELY, RECOMMEND THAT WE OFFER ONLY SFSG. MOST NEEDY POPULATION DOES NOT EAT SORGHUM. CORN, DESPITE REQUEST, IS CONSIDERED ANIMAL FEED. CSB HAS PROVEN UNPOPULAR IN SPITE OF ITS FOOD VALUE. SFSG, ON OTHER HAND, HAS BEEN UNIVERSALLY SUCCESSFUL IN ALL AREAS. END-USE CHECKS HAVE FOUND IT TO BE POPULAR ITEM FROM NOUAKCHOTT TO NEMA AND FROM BOGUE TO BIR MOGHREIN.

11. AS INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE, WE WILL REPORT INTENTIONS OF OTHER DONORS THAT RECEIVE THIS REQUEST.

12. SUBSTANCE OF THIS MESSAGE WAS APPROVED BY AMBASSADOR HANDYSIDE PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURXFOR DAKAR.SHINN

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Message Attributes

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